

WORKING GROUP ON
RE-DEFINING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Minutes of the Meeting

August 21, 2003
Pyle Center, Room 217
Madison, Wisconsin
12:30 p.m.

Present: Regent Fred Mohs, Chair; Regent Beth Richlen, Regent Emeritus Pat Boyle, Senior Vice President Cora Marrett, UW-Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells, UW-Superior Chancellor Julius Erlenbach, UW-Milwaukee Provost John Wanat, UW-Stevens Point Provost Virginia Helm, UW-Madison Provost Peter Spear, Associate Vice President Ron Singer, and Kris McGrew, Director of the UW-Extension Higher Education Location Program

Unable to attend: Regent Elizabeth Burmaster

In opening remarks, Regent Mohs pointed out the need to communicate the meaning of educational quality and how changes in resources affect that quality.

A set of draft goals (attached) was prepared by Dr. Singer pursuant to a telephone conference among Regent Mohs, Chancellor Sorensen, Dr. Marrett, and Provost Spear.

Dr Marrett noted that there are both external and internal audiences with which to communicate and that the focus should be on performance, rather than on inputs.

Regent Mohs asked each member to share their ideas regarding quality:

Noting the importance of measures, Provost Spear mentioned graduation rates, time to degree, and value added for the student. He commented that measures should reflect goals, some of which may not have numerical values.

President Lyall suggested thinking in terms of upper and lower definitions of quality, with the upper level being aspirational goals and the lower boundary being minimum measurable standards below which quality cannot be allowed to fall.

Expressing agreement, Chancellor Erlenbach noted that campus accountability reports show that quality indicators are going down.

Regent Mohs stated the need for compelling measures that will be persuasive to external audiences.

Chancellor Wells pointed out that the university also adds value to the community and enhances community life. Stating that focus should be on the community, he felt that campuses need to be better engaged and closer to the center of community life. He suggested the use of videos focused on outputs and showing key audiences and the “back stage” of what is involved in producing quality.

Regent Richlen commented that it is important to find ways to maintain quality without additional funding through such means as working with the technical colleges and better preparation of high school students.

Noting that measures correlate to the caliber of students, Provost Helms commented that value added is an important approach. While she agreed with setting a lower boundary for quality, she cautioned that the minimum often becomes the maximum. She suggested that success of graduates and contributions to the state might serve as useful measures.

Tricia Yates, staff director for Regent Burmaster, observed that it is important to involve the PK-16 institutions.

Noting the move toward an increasing use of online technology, Ms. McGrew indicated that the current situation makes it difficult to continue the push to innovate.

Suggesting that measures of student satisfaction be included, Provost Wanat noted that acquisition of skills that satisfy work aspirations are important in that regard, not just the degrees that are awarded.

Regent Emeritus Boyle commented on the importance of considering the experiences provided to students and the relationship of those experiences to quality. Such experiences would include areas like undergraduate research and use of technology. Without adequate resources, these types of experiences cannot be provided.

Regent Mohs observed that external audiences respond to compelling comments that they hear from students and parents. In that regard, he felt that a good story often is more effective than charts or statistics and that it is important to talk about quality with legislators and other external audiences in a way that resonates with them. For example, they could sit in on a class with a great professor and talk with faculty and departments heads about what it takes to build a strong department. Provost Helm concurred with this strategy.

Regent Richlen suggested also showing the impact of budget cuts on what is needed to produce quality.

Regent Mohs asked the working group members to review the draft goals for further consideration at the next meeting.

Discussion was concluded and the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.